

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR ARTICLE OF 11 JAN 74

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JAMES NELSON GOODSELL TITLED "U.S. WILLING ON PANAMA CANAL PACT" APPEARS IN TODAY'S EASTERN EDITION OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR.

1. BEGIN QUOTE PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE INITIALED A PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT CALLING FOR THE EVENTUAL END OF UNITED STATES CONTROL OF THE PANAMA CANAL.

2. WHILE OFFICIALS IN BOTH PANAMA CITY AND WASHINGTON EMPHASIZE THE "PRELIMINARY" NATURE OF THE ACCORD, IT AMOUNTS TO A FIRST STEP IN SOLVING PANAMA'S LONG AND BITTER DISPUTE WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE CANAL AND THE ZONE SURROUNDING IT.

3. THE AGREEMENT WAS WORKED OUT THIS WEEK ON CONTADORA ISLAND- A LOVELY TROPICAL RETREAT OFF THE PANAMANIAN COAST, BY VETERAN UNITED STATES DIPLOMAT ELLSWORTH BUNKER

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AND PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER JUAN ANTONIO TACK.

4. FULL DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT HAVE YET TO BE RELEASED, BUT IT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- EVENTUAL PANAMANIAN JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL AND THE ZONE - WITH THE TIMETABLE FOR THE TRANSFER TO BE WORKED OUT IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS.

- WASHINGTON'S FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDEA THAT THE TREATY OF 1903, UNDER WHICH THE CANAL IS GIVEN TO THE UNITED STATES IN "PERPETUITY," IS OUT OF DATE.

- PROVISION FOR THE POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW CANAL THROUGH PANAMA, OR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE PRESENT WATERWAY, BUT IN EITHER CASE ONE THAT WOULD PERMIT CANAL USE BY THE LARGE SUPERTANKERS.

- CONTINUING UNITED STATES DEFENSE OF THE CANAL AS A VITAL LINK IN WORLD OCEAN TRAFFIC.

SUB HEADING ONLY A FIRST STEP

5. BOTH PANAMANIAN AND UNITED STATES SOURCES ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE BUNKER-TACK AGREEMENT IS ONLY A FIRST STEP.

6. "THERE ARE COUNTLESS STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE PATH OF ANY LASTING AND COMPLETE ACCORD ON CANAL ISSUES," A UNITED STATES SOURCE SAID. "BUT THE AGREEMENT IS CLEARLY THE MOST HOPEFUL PIECE OF NEWS WE HAVE HAD ON THIS QUESTION IN 10 YEARS.

7. IT WAS 10 YEARS AGO THAT THE PANAMANIAN DISPUTE WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER THE CANAL FLARED INTO MAJOR RIOTING IN PANAMA WHICH LEFT A SCORE DEAD, HUNDREDS WOUNDED, AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS BROKEN. SINCE THEN, PANAMA HAS REGULARLY CALLED FOR THE TRANSFER OF THE CANAL, WITH LAST MARCH'S SPECIAL UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION THE LATEST FORUM FOR THE PANAMANIAN CASE.

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8. IN THE MONTHS SINCE THAT SESSION, THE TWO NATIONS AGREED QUIETLY TO NEW TALKS ON THE ISSUE - AND THEY WERE BEGUN IN NOVEMBER FOLLOWING MR. BUNKER'S APPOINTMENT AS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR. HE AND MR. TACK HAVE MET THREE TIMES.

SUB HEADING BOTH SIDES ANXIOUS

9. BOTH NATIONS NOW WANT TO MOVE SWIFTLY INTO TALKS ON

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO TACKLE FIRST THE CONTINUING DISAGREEMENT OVER THE TIMING OF THE TRANSFER OF CANAL CONTROL FROM THE

UNITED STATES TO PANAMA.

10. PANAMA IS CALLING FOR THE TRANSFER WITHIN THE NEXT DOZEN YEARS, OR BY 1985, WHILE THE UNITED STATES FAVORS A GRADUAL RELINQUISHMENT OF CONTROL OVER A PERIOD OF FROM 40 TO 50 YEARS.

11. OBVIOUSLY SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE WILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT.

SUB HEADING CONGRESS WARY

12. AN EVEN-MORE-SERIOUS PROBLEM COULD BE THE REACTION IN CONGRESS AND IN VARIOUS OFFICIAL AGENCIES IN WASHINGTON OVER THE WHOLE ISSUE OF A NEW CANAL TREATY. ADVERSE REACTION BY VARIOUS CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES FOR MR. BUNKER.

13. MOREOVER, THE DEFENSE, COMMERCE, AND INTERIOR DEPARTMENTS WILL HAVE TO BE CONSULTED ON THE WHOLE AFFAIR - AND THERE IS SOME CONCERN IN BOTH PANAMANIAN AND UNITED STATES CIRCLES CLOSE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT OBJECTIONS TO PANAMANIAN CONTROL BY DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS MAY BE AN EVEN BIGGER STUMBLING BLOCK.

14. MANY DEFENSE SPECIALISTS HOLD THAT THE CANAL IS VITAL TO UNITED STATES DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS. SOME MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING DANIEL FLOOD OF PENNSYLVANIA, USE THIS ARGUMENT TO OPPOSE ANY CHANGE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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THE 1903 TREATY. END QUOTE
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